

**AMUSING QUOTATIONS FOR DOCTORS AND PATIENTS.** Edited by Noah D. Fabricant, M.D. Grune and Stratton, Inc., New York, 1950. \$3.00.

This amusing book, with short quotations, one to five lines long, seems to be enjoyable by patients and doctors alike, especially if they are in the hospital. There is nothing profound about the book nor does it contain any illustrations, yet it should bring a chuckle every now and then.

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**THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BOTTLE.** By Dwight Anderson. A. A. Wyn, Inc., New York, 1950. \$3.00.

This account by an ex-alcoholic is intended for the alcoholic and those interested in his care. It can, however, be read to advantage by the physician, to whose lot frequently falls the unhappy task of prescribing treatment for this condition. It outlines the facilities at present available for the treatment of alcoholism, and describes the agencies interested in the problem.

The author recounts, with relish, case histories from his own experience and that of others. He has no special plea for any form of therapy, but presents them all in an impartial manner. One gets the impression that, in spite of relating his own cure to the efforts of a psychiatrist, he evaluates the effect of faith, and such agencies as Alcoholics Anonymous, rather more favorably. In this the reviewer must agree with him.

It is doubtful if the book would be of great value to the alcoholic. It is, however, profitable reading for those responsible for the care of an alcoholic, and this includes family, friends, and physician.

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**WILLIAM WITHERING OF BIRMINGHAM, M.D., F.R.S., F.L.S.** By T. Whitmore Peck, M.P.S., and K. Douglas Wilkinson, O.B.E., M.D., F.R.C.P., The Williams and Wilkins Co., 1950. \$4.50.

According to the preface, this splendid little book was written by Professor K. Douglas Wilkinson, successor to William Withering as an Honorary Physician at the General Hospital, Birmingham. This is clearly a labor of love by one well versed in the life and times of a very great figure in British medicine.

In these days of standardized medical and pre-medical education, one point bears emphasis. Withering, among other accomplishments, was a botanist; his "Botanical Arrangement of all the Vegetables naturally growing in Great Britain" (1776) was the first comprehensive English work based on the botanical system devised by Linnaeus forty years earlier. The famous and secret "family receipt" concerning which his opinion was asked in 1775 "was composed of twenty or more different herbs; but it was not very difficult for one conversant in these subjects to perceive, that the active herb could be no other than the Foxglove." This was clearly no accidental discovery, but the work of a prepared mind, that caused the studies which produced "An Account of the Foxglove" in 1785.

The biography further tells of Withering's lucrative practice, his studies in scarlet fever and ability as a clinician, his disputes with the grandfather of Charles Darwin, his interests in chemistry and mineralogy, and membership (together with such men as James Watt, Josiah Wedgwood and the Galtons) in the Birmingham Lunar Society, a group meeting at each full moon in order to discuss topics of literature, art, and science. Birmingham itself is described interestingly. After a discussion of Withering's fatal illness (he died at 58 of tuberculosis) the book closes with appendices devoted to genealogy.

Attractively published, the volume is well illustrated and contains many letters written by Withering. It is recommended highly.

**HEARING TESTS AND HEARING INSTRUMENTS.** By Leland A. Watson and Thomas Tolan, M.D., The Williams and Wilkins Company, Baltimore, Md., 1949. \$7.00.

There is real need for a book that assembles in one place the latest information on the subjects of this title. It is unfortunate that this, the only one available, so strongly features the products of one manufacturer. There are adequate discussions of audiometric technique and interpretation, the "recruitment" phenomenon, speech hearing tests and the Social Adequacy Index. The optimum characteristics to be aimed for in the design of hearing aids as recommended in the Harvard-Davis report are mentioned. There is much that is fairly complex and "scientific" and also much that suggests a sales pamphlet for the hard of hearing layman. Nevertheless, there is a place for this volume in every otologist's library. The index is satisfactory, but the reviewer can see little merit in the system invented for reference to the extensive bibliography.

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**SEROLOGY WITH LIPID ANTIGEN—With Special Reference to Kahn and Universal Reactions.** By Reuben L. Kahn, M.S., D.Sc., Associate Professor in Department of Dermatology and Syphilology, University of Michigan Medical School, The Williams and Wilkins Company, Baltimore, 1950. \$6.00.

This book approaches the question of the serologic tests from an unusual and interesting point of view. Positive reactions between blood serum and lipid antigens are shown to occur in normal individuals and only under carefully regulated conditions do they become diagnostic of syphilis.

The first and last sections of the book are devoted to a discussion of the "Universal Serologic Reaction." The procedure to which this term is applied was devised by Kahn and consists of a series of quantitative Kahn tests set up in ten different concentrations of sodium chloride from 0 to 2.1 per cent and with serum dilutions ranging from 1 to 640. The results are read immediately and after 4 and 24 hours of ice box incubation.

In the lower and higher salt concentrations, some flocculation always occurs, particularly at the 4- and 24-hour readings. The standard quantitative Kahn test with 0.9 per cent saline is near the middle of the battery of tests and is usually completely negative in normal people. However, there is a considerable degree of variation, and some normals show precipitation zones that approach very close to the 0.9 per cent column, from either the low or the high salt concentrations, and a few actually reach it. These, of course, would give biologic false positive reactions in the standard Kahn test for syphilis.

There are some differences in the patterns of flocculation in the Universal reaction that may help to differentiate between syphilis and yaws. In leprosy, flocculation occurs in all salt concentrations but the pattern is different from that seen in syphilis. In tuberculosis and malaria flocculation occurs in a manner that Kahn thinks is distinctive enough to be of value in diagnosis or the estimation of activity. However, some of the examples presented resemble some of the normals so closely that the usefulness of the Universal reaction in these diseases is dubious.

The technique of the Kahn test and its application in the diagnosis of syphilis are discussed in detail. The importance of keeping any test that is used in clinical diagnosis, insensitive enough to avoid false positives, even at the expense of a considerable loss of sensitivity, is emphasized.

It is refreshing to read a book on serology written by a serologist who is so thoroughly aware of the non-specificity of the lipid antigen tests and who appreciates the great injury that is done to people in whom an erroneous diagnosis of syphilis is made because of a false positive reaction.